

Fostering Statement of Purpose



HILLINGDON
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1. Introduction

The Hillingdon Fostering Service believes that children are best cared for within their families where possible, with parents playing a central role in their upbringing. However, where this is not possible, Hillingdon is committed to providing high-quality alternative care within nurturing family environments that promote stability, safety, and positive outcomes.

As part of this commitment, Hillingdon's fostering service was recognised as a key strength in the October 2023 Ofsted ILACS inspection, where Children's Services were rated Outstanding overall. The inspection highlighted the fostering service's effective support for children in care, the stability of placements, and the strong wraparound support provided to foster carers, including through specialist services such as the Multi-Agency Psychological Service (MAPS). Early permanence planning, life-story work, and culturally sensitive support for unaccompanied children seeking asylum were also commended.

The Fostering Service operates within the Care Provision Services, which sits within the Children Services Directorate. It encompasses the recruitment and assessment of foster carer applicants (with assessments now undertaken by contracted Independent Social Workers), the supervision and development of Hillingdon's registered foster carers, and long-term family finding and matching where fostering is the agreed care plan.

The Kinship Team also sits within Care Provision Services and works closely with the Fostering Service, particularly when Regulation 24 carers transition to Connected Persons foster carers and in the ongoing support of kinship placements.

All services operate within the legislative framework of:

- The Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- The Care Standards Act 2000 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (updated 2025)
- The Human Rights Act 1998

- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

A copy of this Statement of Purpose is available upon request to:

- Any person working for the purposes of the Fostering Service
- Any foster carer or prospective foster carer
- Any child or young person placed with a foster carer by Hillingdon
- The parent of any such child or young person
- Any placing authority of a child placed with a Hillingdon fostering family

The Fostering Service must ensure that its operations are always consistent with this Statement of Purpose. It will be reviewed and updated as necessary, and at least biennially. Any amendments will be submitted to the Chief Inspector of Ofsted within 28 days and published on the provider's website.

1.1 The Statement of Values

Fostering is one of the most powerful ways we can change a child's life. It offers children not only safety and stability, but also the opportunity to feel seen, heard, and valued often for the first time. Every foster carer we recruit is a vital partner in our commitment to protect and nurture the children who need us most. As a council, we stand firmly behind fostering not only as a service, but as a shared responsibility towards our children.

The Fostering Service supports and contributes to ensuring all cared for children receive effective care which enables them to fulfil their potential by making them feel safe and valued. Hillingdon's Fostering Service aims to help maximise children's health and educational opportunities through the assessment, support and review of carers, who provide a wide range of alternative placements for our cared for children.

Hillingdon upholds the right of every child to grow up in a loving and stable environment, which will normally be within their birth or extended family. Therefore, we aim to keep families together and reunite children with their families at the earliest appropriate opportunity. When this is not possible, Hillingdon's Fostering Service will

find a home and family for a child that allows them to grow in confidence and independence.

The primary aim of Hillingdon's Fostering Service is to provide the highest quality of family-based care for our Cared For children. It will seek to do this by working in collaboration with all departments within the local authority including the Brokerage Team and through the Stronger Families & Protection Hub (when out of hours emergency foster care is requested).

1.2 Aims and Objectives

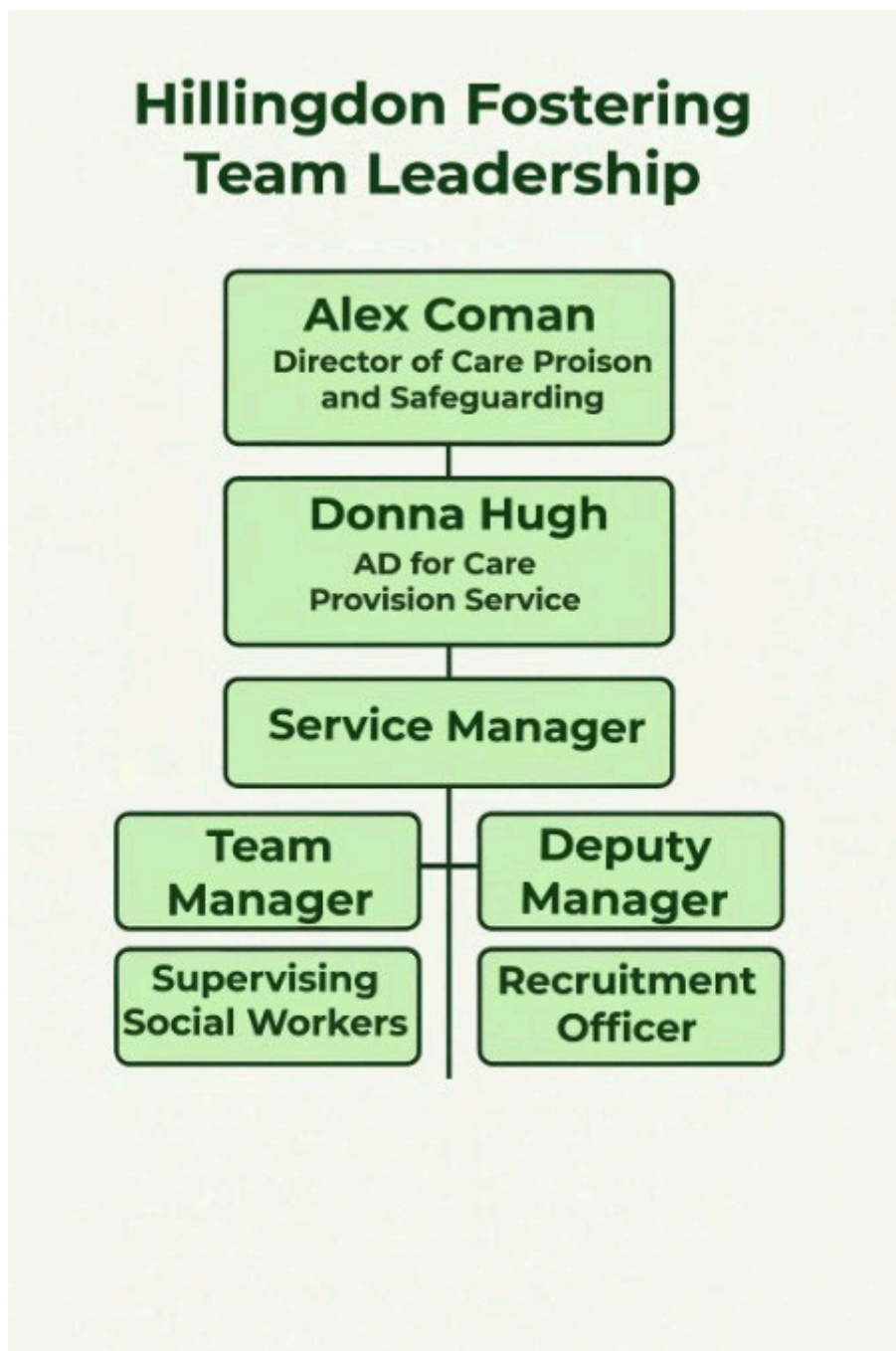
- To provide the best possible families for children and young people to enable them to reach their full potential.
- To recruit, assess, train and support all prospective and approved foster carers, including kinship carers, so they can provide the homes and families which meet the diverse needs of children and young people in a safe and nurturing environment.
- To support and advise all those affected by the fostering process.
- To actively promote fostering and kinship care as the framework to secure alternative homes and families for children, unless there is clear evidence to suggest that this is not appropriate.
- To ensure there are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the Fostering Service thereby ensuring quality services.
- To ensure cost effective services are provided and commissioned which maximise efficient use of resources and provide sufficient alternative family care.
- To provide, wherever possible local alternative families, to promote continuity and maintain the child or young person's family and community networks.
- To ensure prospective foster carers from all backgrounds have equality of access to the Fostering Service and are welcomed without prejudice, regardless of ethnic origin, faith, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, background, marital or employment status and considered on their individual merits.

- To ensure the recruitment process is timely, respectful, fair and delays are avoided.
- To ensure monitoring systems are in place for data to be gathered and used to inform service planning, strategy and procedures.
- To adhere to the principles of Data Protection and Freedom of Information.
- To ensure detailed placement plans are completed, including arrangements for Delegated Authority.
- To raise the profile of the Fostering Service in Hillingdon through partnership with all teams, joint working and the provision of accessible information and advice.
- To ensure the effective matching of the child to the carer's skills and experience to enable the full range of the child or young person's needs to be met.
- To minimise the number of moves and disruptions experienced by individual children and ensuring that stability procedures are followed.
- The Fostering Service plays a vital role in supporting children to move on from care in a planned and positive way. This includes facilitating transitions not only from foster care into independence but also supporting children who step across from residential care into fostering placements where appropriate.
- These transitions are carefully planned to ensure continuity, emotional stability, and the best possible outcomes for each child. In relation to care experienced young people, the service contributes to a smooth and supportive pathway into adulthood, working collaboratively to promote independence, resilience, and long-term wellbeing.
- To consider, with foster carers, staying put arrangements for children and young people.

1.3 The Structure of the Fostering Service

The Hillingdon Fostering Service is committed to delivering high-quality care and support to children and young people through a robust and compassionate fostering service. Our leadership team provides strategic direction, operational oversight, and professional guidance to ensure that foster carers are well-supported and that placements are safe, stable, and nurturing. We work collaboratively across services to promote best outcomes for children, uphold safeguarding standards, and

continuously improve practice through reflective supervision, training, and performance monitoring.



The Fostering Service operates within the Care Provision Service, part of Hillingdon's Children Services Directorate. Hillingdon is committed to continuously monitoring the quality of its services and the outcomes of placements to ensure the best possible support for children and young people.

The expertise, knowledge, and experience of the Fostering Service are fundamental to delivering a safe and effective service. The team comprises both qualified and non-qualified staff. All social workers and managers hold relevant professional qualifications, are registered with Social Work England, and have up-to-date enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

Human Resource records contain copies of staff qualifications, registrations, references, and DBS checks. Staff receive regular supervision, participate in ongoing training, and undergo annual personal development reviews and performance appraisals.

The service is overseen by the Assistant Director of Care Provision Services, who reports to the Director of Safeguarding and Care.

2. Services Provided

The Fostering Service works in partnership with foster carers to safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of children who are unable to remain at home. Foster carers play a vital role in providing stability, care and meaningful relationships that help children thrive.

Since the launch of our enhanced fostering offer in May 2024, we have seen a 200% increase in enquiries, which has significantly strengthened our recruitment efforts. In line with our recruitment targets, our ambition is to grow our fostering pool so that more of our cared for children can be placed within our own provision, ensuring continuity and connection within their local community.

As a result of these efforts, Hillingdon now has 76 fostering households, providing homes for 74 children. For the first time, we have recruited a foster carer who supports both a parent and child, enabling children to remain safely within their family unit. Additionally, 12 connected carer households are supporting 17 children, offering family-linked fostering options that reinforce community-based care and kinship support.

2.1 Recruitment of Foster Carers

Our vision is to provide safe, stable, and nurturing homes where children and young people can thrive. We are committed to recruiting, training, and supporting foster carers who share our values of empathy, inclusion, and resilience. Working in partnership with Fostering with West London, we aim to deliver high-quality fostering services that meet the diverse needs of children across the region.

2.2 Recruitment Strategy

Our recruitment approach focuses on attracting carers from all backgrounds who can offer children stability and belonging. We believe that successful recruitment depends on community engagement, effective communication, and robust assessment processes.

Key priorities:

- **Community-based recruitment:** Working closely with our Communications team to conduct local campaigns, promoting local events, promoting and increasing awareness in our local magazine, Hillingdon People.
- **Targeted campaigns:** Using digital platforms and local media to reach underrepresented groups, including single carers, LGBTQ+ carers, and people from ethnically diverse communities.
- **Foster carer friendly employer:** Hillingdon actively encourage council employees to consider fostering, recognising the empathy, skills and community commitment within our workforce. There is a strong commitment to being a foster carer friendly employer, offering flexibility and understanding to staff who foster, helping them balance their caring role within their professional responsibilities.
- **Care Friends app and Refer a Friend Scheme:** The Care Friends app is utilised to engage carers in promoting fostering opportunities, rewarding them with points and recognition for sharing information, referring potential carers and supporting recruitment activity. The Refer a friend scheme rewards existing carers who successfully refer new foster carers. This not only supports recruitment but strengthens our community by bringing trusted, motivated individuals into fostering.

- **Accessible enquiry process:** Ensuring initial enquiries are responded to quickly, with friendly and informative first contact to encourage progression through the assessment journey.
- **Collaborative promotion:** Working jointly with Fostering with West London to share recruitment resources, campaigns and best practice, ensuring consistency of message and maximising reach.

2.3 Retention Strategy

Retention is at the heart of sustainable fostering. We recognise that carers who feel supported and valued are more likely to remain long term and provide outstanding care.

Our approach includes:

- **High-quality support:** Dedicated supervising social workers, regular supervision, and 24/7 on-call assistance.
- **Ongoing training and development:** Tailored learning opportunities covering trauma-informed care, PACE training, safeguarding, and therapeutic parenting, delivered through joint training with Fostering with West London where possible.
- **Peer support networks:** Regular support groups, mentoring for new carers, and opportunities for shared learning and social connection.
- **Recognition and wellbeing:** Celebrating achievements through annual appreciation events and providing access to wellbeing resources to promote resilience and prevent burnout.

2.4 Working in Partnership with Fostering with West London

We believe that collaboration strengthens outcomes for children. Our partnership with Fostering with West London is based on shared values, transparency, and joint responsibility for service improvement.

Our joint working commitments:

- **Shared recruitment and marketing campaigns:** To maximise reach and consistency across boroughs.
- **Joint training and development:** For carers and staff, ensuring a unified standard of excellence.
- **Information sharing and best practice exchange:** To promote continuous improvement.
- **Regular partnership meetings to review performance:** Celebrate success and identify areas for joint development.
- **Regular performance data:** To evidence impact and challenges.

2.5 Enquiries

All fostering enquiries now go through Fostering with West London, who handle the initial contact and screening. The Recruitment team at Fostering with West London responds to public enquiries, aiming for a same-day response and provides fostering information leaflet to all enquirers. An initial discussion is held to determine whether the applicant may meet the current requirements of the service. Basic information is collected at this stage, and with consent, a form is completed over the phone. If the enquiry is deemed suitable, it is then passed to Hillingdon's Recruitment Officer, who takes over the process and arranges the initial home visit.

2.6 Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers

The assessment and approval of foster carers in Hillingdon is carried out in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services, and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering (updated September 2025). These frameworks set out the legal and practice standards that ensure fostering services operate with transparency, consistency, and a strong safeguarding ethos.

The assessment process is designed to rigorously evaluate whether applicants are suitable, safe, and capable of meeting the diverse and complex needs of cared for children. It considers the applicant's motivation, parenting capacity, lifestyle,

relationships, and ability to provide a nurturing and stable environment. The process also identifies the type of fostering the applicant may be best suited for, such as short-term, long-term, emergency, or parent and child placements and determines any specific terms of approval.

All assessments are conducted using the CoramBAAF Form F, a nationally recognised framework that supports a comprehensive, trauma-informed, and strengths-based evaluation of prospective carers. The process is underpinned by statutory checks, structured training, and quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that only those who meet the highest standards of care are approved to foster.

2.7 Initial Visit

All suitable enquirers are offered an initial home visit within 5 working days of their enquiry. This visit provides an opportunity for applicants to learn more about fostering with Hillingdon and allows the Fostering Service to assess initial suitability. Following the visit, and in consultation with the Fostering Team Manager, applicants are advised whether they will be invited to proceed to Stage One of the assessment process. The Fostering Team Manager endorses all decisions.

2.8 Stage one - Application and statutory checks

Stage one of the assessment process begins once an applicant has submitted a formal application and provided written consent for the Fostering Service to undertake the necessary checks. This stage is designed to establish the applicant's basic suitability to foster and to identify any potential concerns at an early stage. It is conducted in accordance with Regulations 26 and 27 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, and is underpinned by the principles of safeguarding, transparency, and thoroughness.

The statutory checks carried out during Stage one include:

- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all members of the household aged 18 and over, as well as for any individuals who will have regular contact with the child or provide support to the foster carers, such as babysitters or extended family members.

- Local authority checks, including any previous involvement with children's services, and checks with relevant agencies such as the NSPCC, Probation Service, and Health Trusts, to ensure there are no safeguarding concerns.
- Health and education checks for any school-age children living in the household, to assess the overall environment and its suitability for fostering.
- References from at least three personal referees, one of whom may be a family member, and employer references where applicable. The assessing social worker interviews these referees to gain insight into the applicant's character, lifestyle, and capacity to care for children.
- Interviews with previous partners where children were part of the relationship, and with other significant individuals as appropriate, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the applicant's history and relationships.

All information gathered during Stage one is carefully reviewed and evaluated by the assessing social worker and the Fostering Team Manager. If the information meets the required standards, the applicant is invited to progress to Stage two. Where concerns arise, applicants are informed verbally and in writing within 10 working days of the decision, in line with statutory guidance. In some cases, Stage two may begin before all Stage one checks are completed, to avoid unnecessary delays, provided there is no identified risk.

2.9 Skills to Foster Training

All applicants are required to attend Skills to Foster training as part of the pre-approval process. This mandatory course, developed by The Fostering Network, is a nationally recognised programme designed to prepare prospective foster carers for the realities and responsibilities of fostering. It forms a key component of Stage One and contributes directly to the assessment of applicants' suitability.

The training is trauma-informed care, child-centred, and relationship-based, reflecting current best practice in fostering. It includes modules on:

- Understanding the needs of children in care
- Therapeutic parenting approaches
- Safeguarding and child protection

- Supporting identity, diversity, and inclusion
- Managing transitions and contact
- Working as part of a professional team

The course is typically delivered over three days and facilitated by experienced staff, including social workers, approved foster carers, and care-experienced young people. If applicants are applying as a couple, both individuals must attend and complete the training. Where group numbers are insufficient, applicants may be offered a place on the next available course or referred to a neighbouring borough through consortia arrangements.

Feedback from facilitators is formally recorded and shared with the assessing social worker, contributing to the overall assessment. Applicants are also encouraged to complete evaluation forms at the end of each session, which help the service continuously improve the quality and relevance of the training offered.

Skills to Foster provides a foundational understanding of fostering and ensures that applicants are well-informed, reflective, and prepared to meet the needs of children placed in their care.

2.10 Stage two - Foster Carer Assessment

Once Stage one is satisfactorily completed, applicants progress to Stage two. The full assessment is conducted by a qualified social worker using the CoramBAAF Form F (2025 edition), which has been updated to be strengths-based and trauma-informed.

The assessment includes:

- A series of home visits and interviews.
- A written agreement outlining the assessment timetable and expected Panel date (within 6–8 months of application).
- Encouragement of applicant self-assessment and reflection.
- A thorough evaluation of the applicant's capacity to meet the needs of children, including consideration of lifestyle, relationships, parenting experience, and home environment.

The assessment is quality assured by the Fostering Team Manager and Service Manager before being presented to the Hillingdon Fostering Panel.

2.11 Approval Stage

The Fostering Panel, constituted in line with Regulations 23–25, is independent of the Fostering Service and includes professionals and independent members. Applicants are invited to attend the Panel meeting. The Panel makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), who makes the final decision regarding approval. Applicants are informed of the outcome verbally on the day and in writing within 5 working days.

If the application is not approved, applicants have the right to make representations or request a review through the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) within 28 days of receiving the qualifying determination. Prior to approval, a Supervising Social Worker will be allocated to the foster carer/s to support and supervise the carer in the fostering role.

2.12 Fostering Panel

Hillingdon operates a central list of suitably appointed individuals who are called upon to sit on the Fostering Panel, ensuring that each meeting is quorate and appropriately constituted in line with Regulations 23–25 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. Panel members are selected for their experience, expertise, and commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

The Fostering Panel is supported by a Panel Adviser and a Minute Taker, and is administered by the Fostering Service, which oversees its effective functioning, including the recruitment, induction, and annual appraisal of panel members. Panel members and the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) receive copies of all reports and supporting documentation in advance of the meeting to allow for thorough preparation and informed decision-making.

The Panel generally meets twice a month, with additional meetings convened as required to manage increased business. The Panel considers a range of matters, including:

- The approval of new foster care applicants.
- The annual review of foster carers (in their first year, and every three years thereafter, or sooner if there is a significant change in circumstances, approval terms, or following a serious allegation or complaint).
- The matching of children to foster carers for long-term or permanent placements.
- The resignation of foster carers.
- Regulation 24 extensions and the full approval of connected persons providing care.

The Panel plays a critical role in ensuring that fostering decisions are robust, transparent, and in the best interests of children.

2.13 Supervision and Support for Foster Carers

The Service recognises that supervision, support and development opportunities for foster carers is vital to support carers in their work. It is important that foster carers' work is recognised as providing the major component in meeting the needs of cared for children in Hillingdon. Once an approval decision has been made by the Agency Decision Maker, the foster carer will receive written details about their approval and registration. They will meet with their Supervising social worker (SSW) and be given a welcome pack including two copies of the Foster Care Agreement to read and sign, retaining one copy for themselves.

All carers (including Connected carers) have an allocated Supervising social worker, who visits them regularly in accordance with National Minimum Standards and Fostering Regulations. The Supervising social worker also telephones the carer weekly whilst a child is in placement. All visits and support will be tailored to meet the needs of the carer and the child in placement and there will be an increase in support and supervision if requested or deemed necessary by the carers or the Supervising

social worker. When children are not in placement the Supervising social worker will continue to visit at intervals of not more than every 6 weeks unless it has been agreed by the Fostering Team Manager that visits can be less frequent, for example when there is a fixed and agreed break from fostering. In these circumstances an updated assessment will need to be completed and signed off by the Fostering Manager before any children or young people move in with the carers.

As part of the ongoing monitoring and support of foster carers, supervising social workers will undertake at least one unannounced visit per year to the foster carer's home, in line with statutory requirements.

In practice, Hillingdon Council aims to complete two unannounced visits annually, reflecting best practice and ensuring a robust understanding of the child's lived experience.

If there are concerns about the standards of care or specific safeguarding issues, the frequency of unannounced visits may be increased. Foster carers will be informed of any such changes in advance.

A Duty Social Worker is available daily to offer support and advice to all Hillingdon Foster Carers if their allocated Supervising social worker is away from the office and is not contactable.

2.14 Independent Support for Foster Carers

All foster carers approved by the Hillingdon Fostering Service are eligible for individual membership of The Fostering Network, the UK's leading fostering charity.

Upon approval, Hillingdon Council automatically funds the foster carer's annual subscription to The Fostering Network. This membership provides a wide range of specialist support services that benefit the entire fostering household, including:

- 24/7 legal advice and protection, with up to £150,000 in legal expenses
- Access to a confidential stress counselling service
- Independent advice and mediation
- Tax and National Insurance guidance

- Discounts on holidays, family days out, and household services
- Learning and development opportunities
- Regular updates via newsletters and the *Foster Care* magazine
- Opportunities to connect with other carers and influence fostering policy

These services are designed to offer independent support, reassurance, and practical help to foster carers throughout their fostering journey.

For more information about the benefits of membership, visit www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk or call 020 76 20 6400.

2.15 Foster Carer's Handbook

All foster carers are issued with the Foster Carer's Handbook, a comprehensive resource designed to support carers in their role. The handbook contains essential information covering all aspects of fostering, including:

- Roles and responsibilities of foster carers
- Guidance on fostering procedures and policies
- Details of financial allowances and entitlements
- Training and development opportunities
- Support services available to carers and children

The handbook is intended to be a practical and accessible reference, helping foster carers navigate their responsibilities with confidence and consistency.

To ensure carers always have access to the most current guidance, updates to policies, procedures, or other relevant information will be issued as replacement inserts. These updates should be added to the handbook promptly to maintain its accuracy and usefulness.

Foster carers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the contents of the handbook and refer to it regularly. If any clarification or additional support is needed, carers should contact their Supervising social worker or fostering service.

2.16 Children's Handbook

Hillingdon's Fostering Service provides every child placed in foster care with a Children's Handbook, which replaces the previous "Children's Guide to Fostering." This handbook is designed to help children understand what fostering is, what they can expect while in care, and who is responsible for supporting them. It includes age-appropriate information about their rights, routines, how to raise concerns, and how to stay safe and feel supported.

The child's social worker is responsible for ensuring the handbook is shared with the child and for spending time with them to explain its contents in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding, and communication needs. The Supervising social worker also plays a proactive role in supporting this process, ensuring the child has understood the information and feels confident in asking questions or expressing concerns.

The handbook is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant, accessible, and reflective of the voices of children in care.

2.17 Foster Carer Training/ Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The provision of post approval training is central to maintaining high standards of care by ensuring the personal and professional development of foster carers. Each foster carer will have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) completed which is reviewed annually to assess and identify their learning and development needs.

The foster carer's training plan has a comprehensive offer of training courses, and it is now expected that the SSW attends some of the CPD to support the learning and follow this through in their support work with carers. Carers are required to attend a minimum of four training sessions, or the equivalent each year to support them in providing the highest possible quality care. There are mandatory courses specified in addition to the above.

2.18 The Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards

As part of their induction, all Foster Carers are expected to complete the TSD standards by producing a workbook in their first year following approval as foster carers and within 18 months for Family and Friends Foster Carers. The SSW is responsible for assisting the carers in undertaking this work and ensuring that it is completed within the specified timeframe.

2.19 Foster Carer Reviews

Foster Carer reviews are held annually from the date of their original approval. The SSW is responsible for preparing a full set of paperwork with written contributions from stakeholders for each child who has lived with the foster carer during the review period.

All stakeholders of a placement are invited and are expected to provide a contribution for the Foster Carer Review. This forms the essential evidence base to evaluate the care offered to our cared for children in the foster home, to provide the necessary safeguarding for our cared for children and quality assurance of these resources.

All foster carers are required to have DBS and other statutory checks, and medical reports updated every three years.

The review papers are quality assured by the Fostering Team Manager. The complete set of paperwork is sent to the foster carers and the Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO) at least 5 working days before the review meeting is held.

The FIRO chairs the review meeting and prepares a separate report of the meeting with recommendations which are returned to the fostering manager within 5 working days to ensure that these are followed through. Any disagreements about recommendations made by the FIRO are passed to the Service Manager for consideration. For couples who foster it is the expectation that both parties will be present at the review meeting.

The majority of reviews take place in the carer's home. The FIRO does not have any case work responsibilities for Hillingdon and therefore offers a degree of independence; this is the sole remit of their role. Reviews provide an opportunity to positively evaluate progress and practice over the previous year.

All initial Foster Carer Reviews are presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration of continued approval.

Concerns regarding a foster carer's progress or change in circumstances can lead to a review being called at any time.

2.20 Foster Carer's Allowances

The Hillingdon Fostering Service is responsible for ensuring that foster carers receive the appropriate financial support in line with Hillingdon Foster Carers Financial Policy. This includes the payment of fostering allowances and any additional agreed fees.

The financial policy is reviewed periodically by the service to ensure it remains fair, consistent, and in line with national guidance and local priorities. Foster carers will be notified of any updates that affect their payments.

All approved foster carers are provided with clear information about their allowances at the point of approval, and updates are issued when changes occur. Carers are encouraged to contact their Supervising social worker or the Team Manager if they have any questions or require clarification.

2.21 Mockingbird Family Model in Hillingdon

The Mockingbird Hub in Hillingdon is a key component of the Council's Fostering Service, designed to strengthen support for foster carers and improve outcomes for children. Based on the internationally recognised Mockingbird Family Model, the hub provides a central foster carer (Hub Home Carer) who offers peer support, planned respite, and guidance to a constellation of satellite foster families.

This model promotes placement stability, reduces carer isolation, and fosters a sense of community among carers and children. The Mockingbird Hub is integrated within the Fostering Service and works collaboratively with Supervising social workers and the Service Manager to ensure high-quality care and support.

2.22 Kinship Care

The temporary approval of a relative, friend or other connected person and the immediate placement of a child with a connected person under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning Regulations 2010 is a joint responsibility of the child's social worker, kinship duty social worker, and respective Team Managers/Service Manager who will establish if there is a suitable person who is connected to the child, who can provide care if a child becomes cared for.

When such arrangements have been made, the Kinship Team will undertake a Regulation 24 temporary approval assessment within 5 days to establish if it is suitable to continue with this arrangement. The Service Manager or Assistant Director for Care Provision Services must sign off a viability or Reg 24 assessment before a child or young person is placed.

2.23 Matching Children with Safe and Supportive Homes

This is a process where homes and families for children are considered on the basis of first seeking carers from within the child's own network of family and friends (Connected Carers). If this is not possible a carer from within the borough's own fostering resources will be sought unless this is not in a child's interests. If a suitable placement is still not found, then an external resource will be located by the Brokerage Team.

The Fostering Service receives requests for children from social workers after senior managers have approved the child coming into local authority care. The request is provided in writing on a Service Request Form (SRF) and the All About Me form and outlines the reasons for care, the expected outcome, care needs, ethnicity, religion and language and intended timescales, legal status and any other key information that enables a suitable match to be found.

All children and young people will be placed with carers able to meet their needs and will be provided with a bedroom of their own unless they are siblings who have previously shared a room when a risk assessment will be completed and this is suitable to their needs, or if it is a baby under 2 years of age who can sleep in a cot in the same room as the carers.

If certain circumstances, when it is in the child's best interest for them to live with a carer outside of the carer's approval category and the carers agree with this, a variation or exemption, depending on the requirement, will be requested and can be agreed by the Team Manager/Service Manager or Assistant Director for Care Provision Services.

The service will place increased emphasis on ensuring all children's Placements Plans and matching details are recorded systematically and consistently. All forms will be signed and copied to the relevant staff, parents and carers. Copies will be maintained on the carer's file, as well as the child's or young person's file.

2.24 Delegated Authority (DA)

Delegated authority refers to the decision-making power given to foster carers by the local authority or the child's parent (if they retain parental responsibility). It enables foster carers to make everyday decisions about a child or young person's life in order to promote a normal family experience and minimise delay in decision-making.

Delegated authority aims to:

- Empower foster carers to make routine decisions quickly and confidently
- Promote stability and a sense of belonging for the child
- Reduce bureaucracy and delays that impact a child's experience
- Clarify who can make what decisions, avoiding confusion or risk

Delegated authority is guided by:

- Children Act 1989
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010

- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- DfE Statutory Guidance on Fostering Services
- During the Placement Planning Meeting Hillingdon must agree and record which areas of decision-making are delegated to foster carers and which remain with the local authority or birth parents.

Key Principles:

- Best Interest of the Child: Delegation should always consider the child's welfare and care plan
- Timeliness: Decisions should not be unnecessarily delayed
- Clarity: Delegation agreements should be clearly recorded and understood by all parties
- Reviewable: Delegated authority should be reviewed regularly as part of the child's care plan

Areas of Delegated Authority:

Delegation may be full, partial, or retained depending on the situation and birth parents' rights. Common areas include:

Area	Can Be Delegated to Foster Carer?	Notes
Health appointments (routine)	✓ Yes	GP, dentist, optician
Emergency medical treatment	✓ Yes	Always unless explicitly restricted
School trips and activities	✓ Yes	Day trips, overnight stays
Haircuts	✓ Yes	Subject to cultural/religious sensitivity
Religious/cultural practice	⚠ Maybe	Must align with care plan
Passport applications/travel abroad	✗ No	Remains with LA or birth parents

Social media/internet use	✔ Yes	Based on child's age and care plan
Contact with birth family	✘ No	Decisions made by social worker in line with care plan
Sleepovers with friends	✔ Yes	Risk assessed and recorded

In Hillingdon, delegated authority must be:

- Discussed during the placement planning meeting.
- Documented using the Delegated Authority Agreement Form (usually part of the Placement Plan).
- Agreed by the social worker, foster carer, and (where appropriate) the birth parents.
- Regularly reviewed (e.g., at Looked After Child reviews).

Foster carers are encouraged to complete training in:

- Understanding delegated authority.
- Working with birth parent.
- Risk assessment and safeguarding.
- Promoting independence and rights of the child.

Supervising social workers in Hillingdon provide support to ensure carers feel confident in their role and responsibilities under delegated authority.

Delegated authority is essential to ensuring cared for children lead fulfilling, safe, and normal lives. It enables foster carers in Hillingdon to make practical decisions that support children's development and day-to-day experience while respecting legal boundaries and the child's care plan.

2.25 Education

Hillingdon Council's Fostering Service recognises that education and training are vital to helping children and young people achieve positive outcomes and lead successful adult lives. The service is committed to supporting our cared for children to remain in their existing school placements wherever possible, with transport provided if needed to maintain continuity and stability.

Where a change of school is unavoidable, the Fostering Service works closely with the child's social worker and the Virtual School to identify suitable educational

alternatives that meet the child's needs. The Virtual School plays a central role in monitoring educational progress, advocating for our cared for children, and ensuring that schools are equipped to support their learning and wellbeing.

All our cared for children have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which is reviewed regularly in partnership with schools, social workers, foster carers, and the Virtual School. Foster carers are actively involved in promoting and supporting the child's PEP and are encouraged to engage in discussions about educational progress and targets.

Foster carers receive training, guidance, and ongoing support to help them advocate for the child's education and to facilitate access to extracurricular activities, tutoring, and enrichment opportunities that promote learning and achievement. The Fostering Service also works collaboratively with schools and the Virtual School to address any barriers to education and ensure that every child in care has the opportunity to thrive academically.

2.26 Therapy and Mental Health Provision

The service has access to the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) who will provide services to young people with particular mental health needs. In addition, a dedicated psychology service, the Multi Agency Psychological Service (MAPS) provides psychological services for children, young people, professionals and carers. Referrals for this service can be made directly to the MAPS team. MAPS also provide regular consultation and training to staff and foster carers.

3. Storage, Access and Security of Foster Carers Records

Hillingdon Council's Fostering Service recognises the critical importance of secure and accurate case recording. All records are maintained in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, National Minimum Standards, and the Council's data protection and retention policies.

Foster carer records are now stored electronically on the secure Liquidlogic Protocol system, which is used across Hillingdon's Children's Services for case management. Legacy paper files, created prior to the implementation of the electronic system, are archived with a specialist external provider in a secure facility. Access to these archived files is strictly controlled and can only be requested by authorised personnel within the Fostering Service. Archived files can be retrieved within 24 hours if needed.

In line with Regulation 22 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, records relating to approved foster carers must be retained for at least 15 years from the date of the last entry. For applicants whose approval was refused or withdrawn, records must be retained for at least 3 years from the date of refusal or withdrawal.

The Fostering Service also ensures that foster carers understand their responsibilities around record keeping, including maintaining confidential records for each child placed with them. These records must be stored securely and returned to the supervising social worker when a placement ends.

3.1 Allegations, Complaints, Disruptions and Outcomes

All children are entitled to the same level and standard of protection from harm, including those receiving services from statutory or other agencies. Therefore, any enquiries or investigations relating to children in receipt of such services must be conducted in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

Allegations or concerns that a foster carer may have caused harm to a child are investigated thoroughly, promptly, and sensitively under these procedures. The process involves open and honest communication with all parties and ensures appropriate support is provided to those affected. All allegations are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within the Safeguarding Service. Where the threshold for referral is met, Ofsted is notified of the allegation or incident.

It is important to note that even if there is insufficient evidence to support a police prosecution, protective action may still be taken, including consideration of the foster

carer's continued approval. The investigation may also include a review of the foster carer's contact with other children, including their own.

Following the conclusion of an investigation, foster carers are presented to the Fostering Panel for scrutiny and recommendations regarding their suitability to continue providing care. In cases where a decision is made to terminate a foster carer's approval, the carer has the right to request a review through the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

In addition, where concerns relate to the quality of care provided, a Standards of Care investigation may be initiated. This process ensures that any breaches of expected standards are addressed and that the welfare of children remains paramount throughout.

Foster carers are supported throughout the process by their Supervising social worker and have access to the Fostering Network advice line. An independent support worker may also be appointed if required. Details of any allowances paid during this period can be found in the financial policy.

3.2 Complaints

All Foster Carers are given a copy of the "Comments, Complaints, Compliments" leaflet if they wish to raise a concern. Foster Carers can make compliments which are noted in the newsletter and social work 'shout outs' prepared by the Principal Social Worker and sent around to all teams on a monthly basis.

Complaints regarding the Fostering Service can be made to:

The Children's Social Care Complaints Department

London Borough of Hillingdon,

Civic Centre

High Road

Uxbridge

or email:

complaintsmailbox@hillingdon.gov.uk

4. Registration and Inspection

OFSTED is responsible for having an overview of the Fostering Service. They undertake regular inspections of the Fostering Service and during the inspection seek confidential feedback from service users, carers, and social workers.

OFSTED are alerted to any significant incidents in the Fostering Service such as major allegations against carers.

The service is registered with and inspected by Ofsted. Enquiries should be addressed to:

Ofsted

Royal Exchange Buildings

St Ann's Square

Manchester

M2 7LA

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Tel: 08456 404045 (about children services)

Tel: 008456 466666 (complaints about agencies)

Tel: 0161 618 8524 (minicom / textphone enquiries)

5. Document control

Effective date	March 2026	Version number:	0.2
Document owned by:	Children's Social Care	Document approved by:	Children's Social Care

Version history

Version	Approved by	Revision date	Description of change	Author

0.02	Children Social Care	March 2026	Update the Statement of Purpose	Donna Hugh

The version numbering system

- 0.x (e.g., 0.01, 0.02): Draft versions for internal work-in-progress. The number increments with each set of changes before formal review.
- 1.0: First approved version. This signifies the document has been formally reviewed, approved, and is now the official baseline.
- 1.x (e.g., 1.1, 1.2): Minor revisions for small changes after approval (typo fixes, clarifications) that don't alter the document's core substance.
- 2.0: Major revisions indicating significant updates requiring a new, full approval cycle (policy overhauls, substantial content changes).